WENDELL JOICE, Ph.D., *Team Leader, Telework and Workplace Initiatives Team, U.S. General Services Administration*

Federal Telework Topics

Introduction

This paper provides an overview of selected topics and issues regarding the federal telework initiative. The discussion is organized around:

- Origins of the initiative

- Successful aspects/programs

- Challenges

- Helpful partnerships

- Selected telework program variations

- Current events

For purposes of this discussion, the terms "telework," "telecommuting," and "Flexiplace" are synonymous and interchangeable and each is defined as a work arrangement in which an employee regularly works at an alternate worksite such as the employee's home, a telecommuting center (telecenter), or other alternate worksite which saves that employee a more lengthy commute (distance-wise and/or time-wise) to a main worksite. According to recent federal definitions, "regularly" means a minimum average of 1.5 days per week.

To be considered telecommuting, the work done must be in paid status. Thus, for example, working at home extra hours for which the employee is not paid is *not* telecommuting.

Origins

The existing governmentwide telework initiative, formerly called Flexiplace, has been in place since 1990. Flexiplace was established in response to workforce concerns first documented by the Hudson Institute and later by the Department of Labor. The essence of these concerns was a prediction of a turn-of-the-century drop in the quality of the labor pool and the consequent fear that federal recruitment/retention would not be able to compete with private sector salaries. The plan was that initiatives such as Flexiplace would help boost the labor market value of a federal government job.

There is a rich history regarding the origins of federal telework not detailed here. Instead, the reader is referred to the following website and a document titled "The Evolution of Federal Telework" for a full account of the origin of the program as well as other details related to this paper: http://policyworks.gov/telework.

Successful Programs

Despite its chronological age, federal telework is still a relatively new program because of its slow evolution in the federal bureaucracy. This fact has a bearing on how success is defined for federal telework programs. For typical mainstream programs such as training, one can simply implement the program and then judge success by the results produced (trainee ratings of the effectiveness of the training, subsequent performance measures, etc.). With countercultural programs like telework, however, a key success measure, in addition to results produced, is simply getting it off the ground and/or getting it past the pilot stage. Another success measure is the level of implementation or adoption.

Success in Getting off the Ground

We are now more than a decade into the federal telework initiative and most federal agencies have at least a semblance of a telework program. This was not the case in the early years of the initiative. During that time, success was achieved by those agencies that managed to be in the first wave of telework program implementations.

To begin with, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Department of Interior, and the Animal Plant Health Inspection Service of the Department of Agriculture were the first to overcome management and organization culture hurdles and successfully implement programs under the Flexiplace banner. It should be mentioned that these are not the "first ever" federal telework programs (see the Evolution article) but they are the first to be implemented under a government-wide program. It is difficult to assess a common success ingredient here since the three organizations differ in both function and organizational culture. For example, unlike the other two, APHIS had a track record of taking on progressive initiatives. If anything, the key common element appears to be that each had the benefit of a talented, motivated, and skilled human resources professional spearheading the program.

Federal Telework Center (Telecenter) Initiative

Another successful implementation was and still is the federal telecenter program. A telecenter is a cooperatively used and supported satellite office that is conveniently located near the residences of its users. Any agency with employees living near a given telecenter can lease workstations at that center for telework use. This program was established by Congress in 1993 to examine the feasibility and benefit of telework centers. It began with three telecenters in the D.C. area. The program now has 17 telecenters in the D.C. area, several more sprinkled in different parts of the country, and a few federal arrangements with privately run centers nationwide.

The successes of the federal telecenter initiative are that:

- after being roundly rejected by federal agencies in initial Congressional hearings, the planned pilot implementation was still accomplished;

- it continues to have Congressional support and funding;

- it is an on-going demonstration of successful partnerships between the federal government, state and local governments, and private sector organizations; and

- it has consistently demonstrated telework program effectiveness.

In terms of the program's effectiveness, evaluations have shown the same basic positive results garnered by other telework applications: improved employee morale/quality of worklife, job performance, congestion, reduced commute, etc. Also, telecenters have provided innovative benefits as emergency response measures for agency facilities that have been deactivated because of disasters or other events (Northridge earthquake, Oklahoma City bombing, Atlanta Olympics, etc.). Finally, telecenters have been used as part of the reinventing government effort to "bring government to the people" by serving as convenient government service outlets (thus, agency customers share the same reduced commute benefit experienced by teleworkers).

On the other hand, the telecenter initiative has not fared well in terms of utilization levels and the ability to be self-sustaining without a subsidy. Generally speaking, this initiative suffers low utilization rates because of (a) the on-going management resistance to telework and (b) the problem of double overhead. (The concept of "double overhead" is discussed later in the section of this paper titled "Challenges.")

An exception to the telecenter initiative problem is the National Guard program which has focused on converting armories into distance learning centers (during off-business hours when the Guard typically convenes) and telecenters during business hours. The Guard has an expansive and growing nationwide network of these centers; the combination of the Guard's solid funding base for this project and the dual nature of these centers serves to enhance their utilization and support their existence.

Successful Telework Innovations

Following are examples of telework program successes which extend beyond program implementation.

General Services Administration New England Region (GSANE) Telework Program

Like many urban areas, Boston is suffering from massive traffic congestion problems. It has a massive public works program dubbed "The Big Dig" taking place at the same time as the rebuilding of Logan International Airport and the upgrading of numerous local roadways. The result of all this construction, much of which is in the shadow of the GSANE office building, is constant traffic congestion and long, expensive commutes for GSA workers.

As a response to the traffic congestion, the GSANE office established and surpassed a 10% teleworkforce goal. Recent figures show that:

- twenty-three percent of eligible workers work from home one or more days a month;

- thirty percent use technology to perform their work outside the office; and

- there has been a steady increase in the number of teleworkers and the number of days spent outside the office since the inception of the program.

During the same period of time that this program has been operational, the GSANE has been recognized for outstanding performance in a number of areas.

Other successfully applied telework program features include:

- All employees were invited to apply for the program regardless of the position they held.

- The region established a Telework Committee which screened the applications and chose the participants including some who were selected despite reservations on the part of their managers. The committee decided to approve those disputed applications to test the limits of the telework concept. (Managers were given the discretion to terminate the agreement in the event of poor performance, and were not held accountable for problems resulting from a telework assignment they had opposed.) The committee expected that some of the selectees would fail and was willing to accept that short term outcome in order to establish a mechanism to improve the performance of a marginal worker. However, none of the selected teleworkers required corrective action and managers reported that employees whose application they had opposed were working harder and better than they did at the office. By the second phase of the program, some of the most skeptical managers had become active teleworkers and supporters of the program.

- Each teleworker was briefed on how to conduct a safety survey of the home work environment and given a form to complete as part of their agreement.

- GSANE hired a professional facilitator to conduct an in-depth meeting with managers to gauge and respond to their reactions to the Telework Program.

- The Telework Committee directed that all employees could be equipped with cellular telephones, laptops, and docking stations. This, along with other steps, resolved the technology and equipment concerns initially raised as a major impediment to effective telework.

- To expand the program, the Committee decided the most important element of a successful program was how people perceived their jobs. Why were they working from the office every day? Was it just habit or was there some particular reason their function could not be performed from another location? They conducted a region-wide exercise and broke tradition by asking employees to justify why their work should be performed at the main office (as opposed to an alternate worksite).

Federal Railroad Administration (FRA)

This program, implemented in 1995, has documented a successful reduction of expensive facility requirements and a savings in facility funds. It began with a telecommuting plus alternative officing program in 22 Railroad Safety Inspector field offices around the country. Safety Inspectors who volunteered for the program, telecommuted full-time from their homes. Their traditional office space was eliminated. By January 1997, the FRA had closed seven field offices, reduced space in two others, and saved approximately $80,000. In fiscal year 1997, the FRA closed five more field offices and reduced space in three offices resulting in an annual savings of $84,644. In fiscal year 1998, FRA closed six field offices and reduced space in four offices, resulting in a cost savings of $87,285. The FRA estimates that this program is currently yielding about $200,000 per year in facility cost savings.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)

The CPSC also has implemented telecommuting throughout its field organization with successful decreases in facilities costs. Currently, 95 of CPSC's 130 field staff work from their homes. Since its inception on a pilot basis in 1995, CPSC has saved roughly $3 million in space rent.

The Department of Education (DE)

In 1996, DE successfully used an alternative officing solution to deal with budgetary problems. Using a combination of hotelling and home workstations, DE was able to reduce facility costs in regional field office locations. These savings enabled DE to save 24 jobs that otherwise would have been lost.

Governmentwide Depression

While there are numerous individual successful telework programs across the government, the governmentwide incidence of telework is unimpressive. According to recent figures, less than 2% of the federal workforce is teleworking as compared to 10% of the nation's overall workforce. While some agencies have good programs, no agency has a program to match the 25 or more percent levels reported by some private sector organizations.

Challenges

As might be expected with any culture change initiative, there are numerous challenges to the growth of the federal telework initiative. A significant portion of these challenges are rooted in individual and organizational resistance to change, especially when it comes to ingrained attitudes and behaviors.

Management Culture

Without a doubt, the reigning number one challenge confronting the telework initiative is the existing management culture which is still vigorously resisting changes such as telework. Despite a wide array of

specific concerns expressed by managers, the basic issue is that the world is transitioning into new ways to work and new work cultures. Most current managers were trained and excelled in operating in an industrial era workplace and now they are being asked to change ingrained attitudes and behaviors. It's not easy and, for the most part, it's not happening.

Worker Culture

Because management resistance has depressed the growth of telework and received most of our attention, another looming culture change challenge has gone unnoticed until recently. While workers generally endorse the use of telework, they have shown reluctance in making changes such as giving up permanent workstations and/or working in boundaryless organizations. As telework grows, this will become a significant issue.

Resistance by Organizational Support Functions: Human Resources, Information Technology and Facility Management

Rule of thumb guidance recommends that organizational support functions such as human resources (HR), information technology (IT), and facility management (FM) be heavily involved in planning and implementation of telework programs. Moreover, to expand the size and success of telework programs, it is recommended that telework programs be tied into other organizational objectives such as efficient utilization of resources (equipment and facilities). The problem here, however, is that usually these functions are geared to supporting traditional on-site work activity and have displayed the same resistance to change commonly associated with managers. For example, organizations have reported that their IT functions impede telework because of fears and inadequate provisions regarding security of their networks, poor capability for supporting large scale remote access, insufficient resources/skills/procedures for remote technical support, and lack of awareness of new software/hardware options available to facilitate telework arrangements.

Regarding facility management, some agencies have sought to take advantage of potential cost savings experienced by private sector organizations by reducing their expensive main facility requirements via use of telework. At the very least, agencies have wanted to make more efficient use of main office space originally assigned to teleworkers but which now sits vacant for large periods of time. These agencies have reported problems with managers not wanting to give up space, with facility managers troubled by "raindrops" (the transitional situation in which only a few personnel in each organization telework; thus, instead of large contiguous vacant spaces available for new use, there are drops of spaces here and there). Consolidating such drops of spaces and utilizing "reduced boundary" organizations is a change that troubles both facility managers as well as their customers.

Double Overhead and Telecenters

Another challenge in facility management focuses on telecenters and double overhead. As pointed out earlier, there has been resistance to reconfiguring main office space to take advantage of telework and save on facility funds. Agencies that use telecenters must lease the telecenter workstations used by their tele-

workers and, therefore, experience a double overhead cost for each teleworker using a telecenter (overhead for existing main worksite workstation plus lease cost for use of telecenter workstation). This, clearly, is not an efficient use of funds and is a primary deterrent to the development of telecenters.

Successful use of telecenters will require managers to abandon the current culture favoring the use of main office space. Overcoming this cultural bias will enable agencies to utilize alternative officing in their main worksite facilities, exercise more efficient space management, and reduce facility costs. Savings from reduced facility costs would more than offset telecenter fees. However, the current management culture is very reluctant to "give up space," even for immediate cost savings.

There is also a legislative issue lurking here. Currently, when agencies save facility costs, those savings go back into the central treasury and are not received back into the agency budget. This, of course, is a disincentive to saving on facility costs. GSA has a bill before Congress which, among other things, would rectify this situation.

Legislative/Policy Arena

A challenge that recently has become significant is the impact of dated government operating policies. There is an array of established regulations, laws, policies, procedures, etc. that is out of sync with the teleworkforce era. The challenge is to review, revise, and clarify these policies as needed. Changing established policies and procedures in a large bureaucracy is more than a notion. Examples of such policy arenas are OSHA, Workers' Compensation, travel and other areas of pay policy, duty station, tax laws, etc.

Small Agencies

An interesting and somewhat ironic challenge focuses on small agencies. While the federal government has its cabinet departments and larger independent agencies, it has 50 to 100 small independent agencies that go unnoticed by most of the public. Contrary to initial expectations that smaller agencies with smaller and less onerous bureaucracies would be the first ones to adopt workforce changes such as telework, the opposite has been the case. Small federal agencies, as a group, have been more resistant to telework than have larger agencies, as a group. Our challenge is to understand the special needs and cultures of these agencies in order to make more progressive headway with them.

Additional Challenges

The following challenges confronting federal telework are, clearly, not limited to the federal government or, in fact, to just telework. These challenges face all sectors and many of the human resources initiatives for progress in the 21st century.

Measures of Productivity

As with many human resources initiatives, telework is constantly challenged to produce "hard data" regarding its impact (productivity figures, cost projections/justifications, etc.) To some extent, this focus on hard data shackles progress to 20th century production line thinking. It is also an outgrowth of managerial risk aversion which seeks to have numerical analysis be responsible and accountable for decision making. One of the well known problems here, of course, is the long-acknowledged inability to establish credible "productivity" measures on the performance of typical white collar occupations. Despite the recent popular focus on measures and productivity, there has been no real progress in this area and, fortunately, a few experts are beginning to question the wisdom and value of this pursuit. Finally, another developing issue is that the focus on such measures which relate to "quantity" of work produced is overshadowing much-needed focus on the quality of work. Quality assessment, obviously, is even more removed from traditional "hard data" measures than is white collar productivity.

The measurement problem is not limited to such human resources issues. Adequate measurements for assessing costs, pollution impacts, and traffic congestion impacts are also missing or, at least, overly burdensome.

Still, it must be said that credible assessments and measurements are valuable and needed for the workplace. We just need to be more creative and innovative in our approach to this issue.

Mandates

The issue of mandates versus encouragement and /or other incentives is an ironic twist to management progress. The old "x" style command and control model of management has been devalued over the past few decades in favor of a more "progressive" approach involving concepts such as participatory management, incentives, and encouragement. For example, a "reinventing government theme" espoused by the National Partnership for Reinventing Government (formerly known as the National Performance Review) is "Negotiate, don't dictate." The anti-mandate sentiment is heavily promoted in the management community.

The twist is that, while concepts may change, habituated and ingrained human behavior is far more resistant. When it comes to mandates applied to them, managers freely adopt the anti-mandate vie; yet they are not so quick to adopt other counter cultural initiatives such as telework. This is abundantly evident in the excruciatingly slow pace of adoption of progressive workplace initiatives such as flextime and telework.

In all fairness to managers, they are not some different species inimical to workers. It's just that, as leaders, they are supposed to be on the leading edge; consequently the focus of change reaches them first.

The problem question arises, "How long can we afford to wait for the slow, if ever, change in culture to implement much needed changes in the federal (or any) workplace?" Some organizations have addressed and responded to this question by determining that they cannot afford to wait and have turned to mandates as an efficient means to effecting much-needed change. Interestingly enough, after the expected grousing

in response to mandates, many organizations report a successful workforce adjustment to the mandated initiatives. It seems that once the organizations realize they have to adjust and do so, they find that they are comfortable after all.

Following up on this organizational change issue, there is a growing issue commonly expressed by managers who say they would be willing to adopt telework in their organizations for some of the workers but not for others. Because of fears of grievances or other hassles, they decide to avoid telework (or any other progressive change, for that matter) altogether. There is clearly a legitimate issue here. That issue is that some workers are ready for new ways of working and some are not. The population of those who are not ready consists of more than just marginal workers; it also includes workers who, like many of the managers, are not ready to change ingrained habits and attitudes toward working. This brings a new challenge to the art of management: managing differences. Managers will need to learn to implement, facilitate, and manage progress for workers who are ready for change while continuing traditional management with those who are not. This must be done fairly and equitably. For this challenge, organizations would be wise to consider providing support from human resources and change management experts.

Training and Attitude Change

There is often the suggestion that more training is needed to reduce resistance to change and bring about progress. Perhaps, in some cases, this is true. In many cases, however, we are dealing with ingrained attitudes and behaviors. As human behavior experts will tell you, this is not fertile ground for intellectual interventions such as training. In this area, an array of experiential and reinforcement interventions are needed, such as mandates, support mechanisms, pilot projects, and new administrative ways of incenting/disincenting change.

Partnerships

The federal telework program has benefited from solid and supportive relationships with a variety of partners from the public and private sectors, both nationally and internationally. The most enduring and active partnerships are with the International Telework Association & Council (ITAC), the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments, and various pro-telework members of Congress. Involvement with ITAC and a national telework promotion campaign, Telework America!, has resulted in partnerships with numerous private sector organizations such as telecommunications firms, management consulting firms, etc. Work with telecenters, traffic mitigation, and emergency response efforts is based on collaborative relationships with state and local governments such as Atlanta, Oklahoma City, Los Angeles, Maryland, Virginia, and California. Finally, participation in an on-going information exchange with countries such as Japan, Canada, and various European nations has yielded successful partnerships.

Selected Telework Program Variations

Telework Programs for Workers with Disabilities

Prior to the beginning of Flexiplace (1990), accommodation for workers with disabilities was one of the very early uses of federal telework. At that time, such use tended to be a fairly random and infrequent occurrence across federal agencies. Over the years, accommodating workers with disabilities has been a constant aspect of federal telework promotion; it has also, however, been one of the most under-used. To some extent, however, this has been due more to the lack of job opportunities for workers with disabilities than it has been due to telework program failure.

Department of Defense (DOD) Demonstration Program

Impressive, however, has been the telework activity at the DOD, home of the first formal federal effort to utilize telework arrangements for people with disabilities:

"The DOD program grew out of a larger effort to create new opportunities for persons with disabilities in the DOD civilian workforce. The goal was to create a diverse workforce in which at least 2% of all civilians employed would be employees with disabilities. Flexiplace was seen as a way of meeting that goal by offering an attractive work alternative to prospective employees. During the uncertain period of base closures, reductions in force, and changes in administration during the early '90s the DOD altered its goal from creating new opportunities to enhancing current positions." (DOD report on the program)

Findings from the demonstration program supported the conclusion that telework can be useful for persons with disabilities across a wide range of practice and should be a continuing work option. This DOD telework option for persons with disabilities is functioning actively today.

The CAP Program

Since its inception in 1990, DOD's Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP) has provided the equipment and assistive technology for people with disabilities to work at home or other alternate worksites (CAP, 1999). Working together, CAP and the DOD Flexiplace program for people with disabilities found that Flexiplace is an effective accommodation and recruitment tool for people with disabilities. CAP's target groups include:

- Individuals on workers' compensation or disability retirement;

- DOD employees with disabilities who could be more productive if they were allowed to work part or all of the week at home or in some other off-site location; and

- Persons with disabilities who have been unable to be employed because their disabilities make it difficult for them to function in a federal workplace on a regular basis.

Assistive devices supplied by CAP can:

- Allow injured employees to continue working in some capacity;

- Help employees return to work after injury in a more timely manner; and

- Help prevent further debilitation.

Today, CAP reports continuously increasing numbers of recipients of its services.

Executive Memorandum: Employing People With Significant Disabilities Utilizing Alternate Work Sites

In July 2000, President Clinton issued an executive memorandum directing all federal agencies to (1) identify positions that can be relocated to alternate worksites and that can be filled by qualified individuals, including those with significant disabilities, and (2) regarding the identified positions, develop an action plan for encouraging the recruitment and employment of qualified individuals with significant disabilities. While the fruits of implementation have yet to be harvested, this memorandum is intended to expand the opportunity for all federal workers to telework, including those with disabilities.

Workers Compensation Activity

During the early 1990s, agencies such as the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Department of Labor, and DOD (as mentioned above) began experimenting with the use of telework to (1) provide opportunities for recipients of workers compensation and (2) reduce the size and expense of the Workers' Compensation (WC) Program.

Three major difficulties were uncovered:

- A risky situation for WC recipients who make the effort to use telework to return to work. The risk is that if, for some reason, the telework option does not work for the recipient, the recipient may face significant administrative difficulties or barriers when attempting to return to the WC program;

- A mistaken general belief by employers that WC recipients are not interested in returning to work; and

- An informal finding that some WC recipients would not be welcomed back to their workplaces.

The latter two difficulties are program issues that could be overcome with a well-managed program initiative. The first difficulty (recipient risk), however, requires a legislative fix.

Faced with such difficulties, efforts to develop a feasible and comprehensive telework option for Workers' Compensation faded out by the mid-1990s. Various small initiatives continue to tackle this challenge.

Currently, however, the absence of any federal policy, legislation, and/or program established to bring the benefits of telework to Worker's Compensation continues to be a significant lost opportunity.

Equipment Provision

Another program variation has to do with the provision of equipment for use by teleworkers. As can be seen below, federal agencies deploy a wide variety of program approaches to this issue:

- Many agencies have devoted funds to purchase equipment for teleworkers. Typically, this includes computers, modems, printers, and/or fax machines. Also, typically, this means dual sets of equipment (for the main and alternate worksites) for the majority of teleworkers, who tend to be part time teleworkers.

- Other agencies utilize surplus equipment for use by their teleworkers.

- Some agencies with particular budget issues have required their teleworkers to provide their own equipment.

Managers and Support Staff

A typical finding for federal telework is that disproportionately fewer managers and/or administrative support staff personnel utilize telework. This can be due to policy restrictions, lack of understanding/ exposure, and/or management resistance. There are some exceptions in which a few agencies have actively encouraged managerial telework. Low support staff participation in telework can be traced to the widespread belief that an office cannot function unless all support staff are physically present. Again, however, a few agencies have implemented programs and policies that facilitate the participation of support staff. For example, some offices use a tag-team approach in which the "physical presence" requirements (typically reception duties) are handled cooperatively, on a rotating basis, by one staff person covering several offices while other support staff in those other offices are engaging in telework.

Current Events

Following are selected projects that are currently underway.

Spousal Telework Employment Project

There are numerous occupations in federal agencies which require periodic geographic relocations of employees. This requirement has long been a source of burden and disruption for the families of these employees. One particular problem, which has been the subject of recent publicity, has been the adverse impact on the careers/jobs of spouses who want to accompany these employees on their relocation assignments. As a response, a task force of federal agencies, led by GSA and DOD, is putting together a pilot program which plans to use telework as a way to facilitate the continuation of careers and/or provide career opportunities for spouses of relocated federal employees.

Government-wide Policy Review to Remove Policy Barriers/Hindrances to Federal Telework

As mentioned above, many federal policies are dated and out of sync with present-day workforce needs, especially those of telework programs. As federal telework has grown, the number of policy-related inquiries has increased. These inquiries have spotlighted numerous policies which require revision, clarification, or removal in order to facilitate the growth of federal telework. GSA and the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) are leading an interagency task force to conduct a comprehensive review of relevant federal operating polices and make recommendations as needed.

Research and Demonstrations

GSA, OPM, and the Department of Transportation are in the conceptualizing stages of designing research and/or demonstration projects involving telework in areas such as emergency preparedness, programs for workers with disabilities, and reducing main office space requirements via alternative officing.

Comments by Gina Vega, Ph.D., *Assistant Professor, Merrimack College*

Building the Case for Telework

Overview of Opportunities and Challenges

There are both identifiable paths to success as well as obstacles to implementation inherent in building the case for teleworking in the federal government. These paths and obstacles have been outlined succinctly in Wendell Joice's paper on Federal Telework Topics (2000). The proven paths and great opportunities fall into the categories of reduction of pressure on the natural and physical (infrastructure) environment, budgetary efficiency, and potential quality of work life enhancements for a variety of American populations. The obstacles reside in the three general areas of:

- Organizational culture;

- Availability of supporting resources; and

- Diminished expectations, missed opportunities, and limited vision.

This paper adds a fourth to that list:

- Unnatural acts.

Opportunities

The reduction of stress on the environment and the infrastructure has been well documented for at least a decade – there is no need to discuss them further at this time. Joice accurately reports the goals of the teleworking initiative that support and protect our natural resources as well as the contention that work-at-home programs and alternate work structures often improves worker morale and job performance. We have moved past the era that validated quantitative measurements above all others when it comes to human behavior; we do need to search out more creative and innovative ways to assess achievement of goals.

One of the most valuable and satisfying results of the emphasis on telework has been the development of a variety of adaptive technologies that allow people with disabilities to work to their full potential. The population that deals with various handicapping conditions that have limited work access in the past can benefit greatly from opportunities provided by teleworking. The federal government can also benefit enormously from an underutilized and currently significantly under-employed worker population that has hardly

been tapped due to previous difficulties in accommodation to existing workplaces. The identification of these jobs is the current responsibility of federal managers, and they need some guidance in determining which of their job titles can be sensibly filled by people who are not readily able to work in existing centralized locations.

The same holds true for some recipients of workers compensation. This program holds great potential for success, both in accomplishing needed work that may remain undone while workers are receiving WC benefits and in allowing workers to continue performing the work activities that are not affected by whatever they are receiving WC for. When people feel that they are contributing members of a work group and that they are needed, they are likely to maintain their "edge" and return to work in a more positive frame of mind. The author rejects the "informal finding that some WC recipients would not be welcome back to their workplaces" (Joice, 13). It seems groundless in light of the need for workers and the skilled workforce population crunch.

The bright spots of opportunity inherent in telework are exemplified in Dr. Joice's inspiring highlights of the GSA New England Region Telework Program in Boston. This creative program provides clues for telework's future success, clues which are too often hidden underneath layers of rhetoric about how telework will solve all of our nation's economic, social, and environmental ills. (On behalf of the Bay State, however, any and all means of traffic relief around the area of the Big Dig are always welcome). In Boston, every single employee, regardless of position or grade (not just those meeting specific criteria), was invited to participate in the program. The goal was 10% participation; the actual rate skyrocketed to 23%. Performance in other operational areas has been exemplary for this region. Yet, despite this creative program's success, it falls outside the definition of telework because 1.5 days per month of work does not meet the standard criteria of 1.5 days per week working at an alternative location.

Despite such bright spots, participation in telework has not been wholeheartedly endorsed in the federal workplace. The overall participation figures are dismally low.

Challenges

It is with the challenges articulated by Dr. Joice that this paper takes exception.

Organizational Culture

The teleworking ventures that have proven successful have arisen from the same culture that is described as inimical to emergent work structures, and it has happened for several straightforward reasons. The successful programs have in common a set of some cultural and organizational design characteristics that have facilitated the development and implementation of these emergent work forms. These characteristics have typically included:

- work groups whose task assignments lend themselves to off-site production, such as surveyors, lawyers, and investigators;

- technical employees and/or workers in self-managed positions (Grade 12 and higher);

- the fortune or misfortune to be located in an area with either extreme congestion (like Boston's Big Dig area), severe pollution (such as certain CDC programs in Atlanta), or great distances to be traveled to a central workplace (such as OSHA offices in Texas or Colorado);

- extraordinary budgetary constraints to be met that force consideration of alternate solutions or new directions (such as the case with the federal Railroad Administration) or surprisingly deep pockets that permit the extensive hiring of experienced outside consultants and the purchase of excellent portable equipment (such the GSA northeast region); and

- a method of rewarding rather than penalizing entrepreneurial behavior.

These have acted as stimuli for the creation and acceptance of new work designs, regardless of a national federal work culture that has been described in other, less agreeable terms. The large bureaucracy that is the heart of the federal organizational structure has been superseded, in the successful telework programs, by a sense of agility that is unexpected and therefore all the more effective.

When we talk about the organizational culture of the federal government, we must take care not to aggregate all departments, agencies, and sub-agencies and somehow "average" their individual cultures into one identifiable, but inaccurate, whole. The culture that has been identified as the federal workforce culture is epitomized by:

- managerial resistance to change;

- ingrained attitudes and behaviors that remain stuck in an industrial era workplace;

- workers who are reluctant to give up their permanent workstations;

- discomfort with boundary-less organizations by both managers and workers;

- resistance to change by support services in terms of security concerns, inability to support remote access, insufficient resources devoted to remote technical support, lack of awareness about new technological solutions;

- managerial reluctance to give up space;

- a system of double overhead that gets in the way of the reconfiguration of office space; and

- budgetary disincentives to saving on facility costs by sending such savings to the Department of the Interior and not to the specific agency's budget.

This laundry list of cultural problems appears insurmountable when described in this way. Appropriate cultural change would demand reversals to the expected and accepted, and would usher in an era of change that would include:

- an attitude that welcomes change in the workplace and that looks towards an information age workplace;

- high comfort level with uncertainty;

- the ability on the part of workers to determine one's own work design;

- availability and access to sufficient technical support;

- removal of value on "space for space's sake;"

- realization of actual savings that could be reallocated to needed areas; and

- the return of any savings realized to either federal workers themselves or to their agencies.

This set of requirements may be too much to demand of federal managers and workers without significant preparation and re-socialization. For example, the establishment of a Telework Committee in the Boston region provided some manager-approved, formal relief from the standard fear of failure that often limits the creation and implementation of ground breaking programs in traditionally hierarchical work environments. The difficulty of describing and measuring work, endemic to a self-protective culture, was virtually obliterated by the requirement that workers justify their work location, thus forcing the question down to the level in which it correctly resides – that of the individual worker.

Resources

Some of the successful programs that we hear about share a unique characteristic in government working circles – access to deep pockets. Dollars can provide both technical expertise (in the form of consultants and facilitators from outside the government who are not tied to yesterday's solutions or to a career path dependent on the government's grade system) and actual equipment – laptops, modems, et al. – that keep workers on the same virtual page as their in-office colleagues.

There is little as inimical to business success as inadequate tools to perform required tasks. We would not suggest purchasing used medical equipment or old technology for our military hospitals; neither should we suggest that workers who depend on electronic technology for accomplishing their jobs be required to use antiquated computers or other equipment. Most federal agencies cannot afford to purchase duplicate equipment for workers. In fact, simply upgrading existing equipment is beyond the fiscal ability of some, as a result of the existing legacy of nearly-outdated technology. At present, many federal teleworkers are required to use either their own home computers or to use equipment that has been handed down by their departments when they upgrade.

One of the most successful tactics undertaken by private industry has been to recognize that workers out of the main location need *more*, not less support, and they have reallocated their resources accordingly. Done skillfully, this one action can have greater impact than many of the more obvious, visible managerial support interventions and certainly has more universally positive impact than do mandates. We have only to compare the success of the Big Dig-affected GSA workers, supplied with cellular telephones, laptops, and docking stations, with that of workers in other agencies or offices using their own home computers or hand-me-down electronic relics, released by their own departments in favor of newer equipment.

It is important to mention at this time that most federal workers must absorb the costs related to telework themselves. That is, they pay their own electricity, their own telephone bills, and they maintain the heat in their home offices at a working level (rather than lowering it during the day as they might if no one were at home). Concerns have been expressed about the double overhead costs that are incurred as a result of maintaining both a central office location and a telecenter location for teleworkers who work at these alternate facilities. Granted, this is not an efficient use of funds. Nonetheless, and regardless of however efficient it may be, it is not ethical for the government to have workers subsidize their own work locations. A reminder is in order that shifting the costs to the worker does not eliminate the actual costs, only the government's burden and responsibility for them.

Diminished Expectations, Missed Opportunities, and Limited Vision

We have accepted the inevitability of teleworking as the form most appropriate to the information era worker. It is therefore distressing to hear this innovative and inexorably-to-be-accepted work design referred to as "countercultural," as is done in Dr. Joice's paper. Telework is far from countercultural, touted as it is as the 21st century worker's natural work habitat. "Simply getting it off the ground and/or getting it past the pilot stage" (Joice, 2) suggests that the implementation of telework is a challenge that the government is far from being able to meet.

Although hamstrung to a certain extent by limited autonomy, nonetheless programs have been introduced, accepted, and endorsed. The success of the early programs was owed, in good part, to the historical need of the workers in those departments to work offsite. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, Department of the Interior, and Animal Plant Health Inspection Service all employ many workers whose job success is dependent upon site visits, so telework is a natural adjunct of their daily work structure.

But the ongoing success of more and more innovative and unique programming trials across the nation has indicated clearly that telework is neither countercultural nor is it a trend in danger of being halted. The impetus provided by fiscal expediency, environmental stresses, and urgent demands by the heads of today's families should reassure us that teleworking is not going away. The danger lies not in worker or managerial expectations, but in diminished expectations and limited vision on a higher level.

We are informed that there is a movement toward consideration in the federal workplace of the quality of work accomplished as more substantive than the quantity of work accomplished, and that this tendency is moving us away from quantitative measures and towards a qualitative approach to assessing costs and impacts (Joice, 8-9). This should be applauded. We are also informed that there has been a significant movement away from command and control, Theory X (McGregor 1985) management and toward participatory management and negotiated agreements (Joice, 9). Again, this movement is favorable.

Why, then is there an immediate desire to return to the discarded model, the model of mandates, when it becomes difficult to negotiate the desired change? Why should we consider the proposal to reinstate a top-down, back to Theory X method for expanding the valuable, win/win teleworking solution? The sug-

gestion that teleworking will be warmly embraced once the "expected grousing in response to mandates" (Joice, 9) dies down returns us back even further into industrial era thinking than imagined – it takes us straight back to 1915 and Frederick Taylor's one best way to perform any management-desired activity. This is not worthy of the United States government in the year 2000.

Unnatural Acts

The challenge of advancing teleworking in the federal workplace is not so much the negatively framed "resistance to change," but rather that the federal workforce is suffering from cognitive dissonance (Festinger and Carlsmith 1959), the inability to reconcile the actual demands of the workplace with their ingrained and firmly socialized beliefs about what the workplace "should" be. They are being expected to perform "unnatural acts."

Federal managers are no different from the managers in private industry who have accepted telecommuting (and that is far from being a universal state) except in the key area of socialization. This relates to the basic difference between government employment and employment in the private sector. The presence or absence of a profit motive creates the perception of completely different work environments, and these cannot be addressed with the same tools.

There exists a fond tendency among government employees to concatenate democracy and its organizational forms with capitalism and its organizational forms. These, however, are not interchangeable. When we ask people who have been trained from the outset to maintain and protect the status quo (as we expect of government employees) to behave instead like people who have been trained to embrace change and to expect support in their entrepreneurial or intrapreneurial activities (as are employees in the private sector), we are likely to be disappointed.

We are demanding that federal managers toss aside all they have internalized about control, monitoring, and other techniques of industrial age management without providing them new alternatives. We are also demanding that workers who have had a long history of being monitored and measured suddenly become responsible for themselves. We are expecting that workers find comfort in a boundaryless workplace after spending years in a sign-in, check-out, uniformed guards at the entrance, access-limited environment. This is not realistic. We have a responsibility to replace the loss of comforting activities with something else.

Federal managers and federal workers simply don't understand their new jobs. Do we really understand them ourselves?

Cooperation and socialization cannot be mandated; they take time and must be handled gracefully. The "just do it" approach suggested in Dr. Joice's paper would be appropriate in the Taylorian society of the industrial age that we are told to move beyond, but it does not fit today. We cannot risk pulling out the supports of the foundation of the federal workforce without shoring up that foundation with a new set of supports.

With all respect to the strength of the appeal of mandates, focus should instead be on the creation of a set of bottom-up incentives, reorientation and retraining at all levels of the federal workforce, and recognition that, until federal managers are trained to be federal leaders, we cannot expect them to operate on the "leading edge" (Joice, 9).

Above all, we must find a way to allocate sufficient resources to permit the broad implementation of the desired teleworking solutions without demanding that managers or workers perform what they perceive of as unnatural acts.

References

L. Festinger and J.M. Carlsmith, "Cognitive Consequences of Forced Compliance," *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*, Vol. 48, 1959, pp. 78-92.

W. Joice, "Federal Telework Topics," presented October 16, 2000 at "Telework and the New Workplace of the 21st Century," Department of Labor, Xavier University, New Orleans, LA.

D. McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1985.